United Nations A/C.1/58/PV.8

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

First Committee
8th meeting
Tuesday, 14 October 2003, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Sareva ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 62 to 80 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairman: Before proceeding with our work, I see that we have with us today our young colleagues from the Disarmament Fellowship Programme. I would like to extend a warm welcome to them on behalf of the Committee and on my own behalf. I sincerely hope that this next generation of disarmament experts will find that they have gained an invaluable experience by closely observing the work of the First Committee.

Mr. Ndoumbe Eboule (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Mr. Chairman, I would like to inform you that Ambassador Belinga-Eboutou, who was supposed to present this statement, was not able to attend and he has asked me to present the following message on behalf of the Cameroonian delegation.

I would like to express our delegation's sincere congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee on Disarmament and International Security of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. Your vast experience and your diplomatic ability guarantee the success of our work. Our congratulations are naturally intended for the other members of the Bureau as well, who will be assisting you in your delicate and challenging work as Chairman of our Committee. The delegation of Cameroon will provide you with its full support and cooperation. I should also like to extend to your predecessor, Ambassador Matia Semakula Kiwanuka of Uganda, my delegation's appreciation for the remarkable work that he accomplished under his chairmanship and on the brilliance with which he guided our work. My country also congratulates Mr. Nobuyasu Abe on his nomination on 28 June as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and we give him all our wishes for his success. It is also an opportunity to congratulate his predecessor, Mr. Dhanapala, and to reiterate how much Cameroon appreciated his devoted and constant personal commitment to the issue of disarmament.

This year once again we are meeting in the context of a dangerous world situation. We live under the permanent threat of weapons of mass destruction, to which is now added the increased threat of biological, chemical — and perhaps even nuclear — terrorism, as well as the threat posed by conventional weapons and particularly small arms and light weapons, which continue to claim thousands of victims throughout the world and to present the dominant threat to international peace and security.

In that context, it is more than ever crucial that we promote universal adhesion to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which remains the cornerstone of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Cameroon is a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and remains convinced that, as was recognized by the all the States Parties at the 2000 Review Conference, the total elimination of nuclear

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weapons is the only guarantee against the use or threat of the use of nuclear weapons.

We encourage United Nations Member States that have not yet done so to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Over the last decade, the integrity of the nuclear non-proliferation regime has been challenged in a number of regions in the world. However, the reinforcement of that non-proliferation regime should be accompanied, on the part of those nuclear Powers, by greater efforts to reduce their stockpiles. At the same time, we need to make it our business, as the Secretary-General recommends, to work towards the reduction and elimination of the threat of additional countries becoming nuclear-weapon States.

Cameroon welcomes the entry into force last June of the Moscow Treaty signed in 2002 between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on the reduction of their warheads. We are confident that all commitments under the Treaty will be fulfilled.

My country calls upon all States parties to meet their obligations under article VI of NPT and to continue observing a unilateral moratorium on nuclear tests, while waiting to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). I would also like to call upon States parties to implement the 13 measures that were agreed at the 2000 Review Conference.

We also welcome the work that has been carried out at the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Cameroon will spare no effort between now and 2004 to ensure that a consensus is reached at the Review Conference.

Cameroon is convinced that an important component in promoting nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament is the encouragement of the creation, wherever possible and desirable, of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of freely agreed arrangements between the States in the region. It is regrettable — in the context of the new regional peace and security architecture established following the creation of the African Union — that the Treaty of Pelindaba, which created a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa, has still not entered into force. We encourage African States to sign and ratify that Treaty so as to ensure that it enters into force as soon as possible.

My country, which is a member of the Conference on Disarmament, regrets that, like last year, the Conference on Disarmament — the only multilateral body for negotiations on this issue — has this year once again still not been able to reach an agreement on its programme of work. The proposal known as the "Five Ambassadors Initiative", presented by Algeria, Belgium, Chile, Colombia and Sweden, is a source of hope. We consider that it presents the best chance to pull the Conference on Disarmament out of its current impasse so that it can successfully develop a programme of work or an agenda.

As you know, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), like the NPT, is one of the pillars for international non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament negotiated at the Conference on Disarmament. That Treaty held its third Conference in Vienna a few week ago, with a view to facilitating its entry into force. As was noted by the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Committee here a week ago, that Conference demonstrated, furthermore, the determination of States to promote the entry into force of the Treaty and, meanwhile, to observe the moratorium on nuclear tests.

We believe that the 12 remaining States — out of the 44 ratifications needed for the entry into force of the CTBT — should examine and agree to the 12 measures suggested to accelerate the process of ratification and ensure the entry into force of the Treaty. Aside from its commitment to general disarmament, Cameroon has also committed to housing a radionuclide station as part of the international surveillance system to be implemented under the Treaty. We should take care, in particular, not to further compromise the work already done to achieve nuclear disarmament.

During the intersession, in May of last year, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction held its first Review Conference. Cameroon welcomes the conclusions of that Conference and particularly the political declaration that was adopted by consensus at that meeting, which reaffirmed the commitment of States parties to non-proliferation and the total and verifiable elimination of chemical weapons.

My delegation is gratified by the remarkable progress that has been made towards the universalization of the Convention and we encourage the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to persevere in that connection, keeping in mind its special responsibility to prevent the danger of chemical terrorism in accordance with Security Council resolution 1373 (2000).

On a parallel topic, with respect to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, we should recognize that, while the agreement reached in November 2002 on the programme of work represents undeniable progress towards multilateralism, there is still a need to strengthen the Convention through an additional protocol.

My delegation has no wish to go over in detail what was already said on the destabilizing proliferation, circulation, accumulation and illegal trade in small arms and light weapons. It represents a threat that is at least as important as that presented by the proliferation of nuclear weapons for international peace and security. Cameroon welcomes the successful conclusion and outcome of the first Biennial Meeting of States to Consider Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It is an important testament to the commitment of States Members of our Organization to the implementation that United Nations Programme of Action, adopted at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Lights Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York in July 2001.

I would like to congratulate the Chairperson of the first Biennial Meeting of States, Ambassador Inoguchi of Japan, for her commitment and her decisive contribution to its success.

Within the context of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, my country continues to contribute actively to promoting confidence-building measures between the countries of the subregion with respect, in particular, to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects at the national and subregional levels. We would also like to mention that members of the Advisory Committee, in a lead up to the 19th ministerial meeting, held a seminar on the implementation of the Programme of Action in Central Africa on 12 to 14 May 2003 in Brazzaville, which resulted in the adoption of a priority programme of action for Central Africa.

I would like once again to express the gratitude of the countries of Central Africa to the international community for the support they have given to the work of the Advisory Committee and to make an appeal to the members of the First Committee to ensure that the draft resolution on the activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa is adopted by consensus, as was the case in previous years. Moreover, Cameroon appreciates and supports the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Tracing Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Furthermore, my country is fully satisfied with the conclusions of the fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction held in Bangkok, Thailand. That Conference confirmed our commitment to rid the world of all anti-personnel mines and to lay the groundwork for the success of the first Review Conference to be held in Kenya next year.

I cannot end without expressing my country's gratitude to and full support for the regional centres for peace and disarmament, particularly the Centre in Africa, which continues to be a vital instrument for support to regional initiatives in the areas of disarmament, peace and security. As he did last year, the Secretary-General highlights in his report that the Centre in Africa is still facing major financial difficulties that are preventing it from fully exploiting its capacities and from fulfilling its mission. In terms of its viability, it is essential that the Centre be able to count on reliable and increased financial support from Member States. My delegation reiterates its gratitude and satisfaction with the programme of fellowships on disarmament and we also appreciate the remarkable contribution that that programme makes in increasing our regional disarmament capabilities.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): Mr. Chairman, let me begin by extending the congratulations of the Croatian delegation to you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee, as well as to the other members

of the Bureau. I am confident that your substantial experience in the security sphere will have a positive impact on the work of the Committee. In that regard, I assure you of the full support of my delegation.

Croatia has undergone a transformation from a country that benefited from the presence of international security mechanisms on its territory to one that actively contributes to international peace and security. In the 1990s there were thousands of international peacekeepers working in Croatia, whereas today Croatian experts and troops are taking part in five United Nations peacekeeping missions throughout the world, including a military police unit in Afghanistan. Croatia also plays a key role in long-term confidence building and stabilization in South-Eastern Europe. We are deeply engaged in regional disarmament, regional stability building and the promotion of good neighbourly relations. Our strong belief is that South-Eastern Europe is on the path to becoming a success story, not only in terms of enhanced stability, but also through economic recovery.

Evidently, reform is the prevailing theme of the current session of the General Assembly, as well as that of most of its committees. In the past week, we have heard a number of well-elaborated proposals on reshaping the work of the First Committee, and we are encouraged by the fact that all of them share certain elements. Improving the Committee's working methods seems to be on everyone's mind, thereby indicating the possibility of reaching a consensual conclusion. While we understand the frustrations of many with the global situation in terms of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, we invite all delegations to try to placate their concerns somewhat by agreeing on a number of steps that would make our future work more rewarding. One important element of the proposed reform is shortening our speeches and distributing the longer version of national statements. In support of this practice, I will make just several points, while an integral version of Croatia's speech will be distributed in the room.

Therefore, on the issue of weapons of mass destruction, Croatia is very concerned that, year after year, almost all the major international treaty-negotiating bodies have failed to make any significant progress in their work. Croatia believes that further progress in nuclear disarmament issues must start with the full and effective implementation of decisions and agreements already in force.

We believe that it is a legitimate right of non-nuclear States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) — and it is in their vital interests — to come together and call upon nuclear-weapons States to abide by the obligations that they themselves have agreed to implement through the NPT. Multilateral treaty bodies should not become an extension of power politics and positioning, with no regard for the legitimate interests of the great majority of United Nations Member States, whose destiny in many ways lies in the hands of a select few.

Although we consider national moratoria to be a way of refraining from nuclear tests, it is our firm belief that a universal mechanism is the only true protection from the devastation caused by nuclear tests. We should exercise our wisdom and join all our efforts to achieve the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

On the issue of biological weapons, let me just state that as regards the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), Croatia was actively involved in the work of the Ad Hoc Group of States parties to the BWC and is deeply disappointed with the breakdown of negotiations during the fifth Review Conference of the BWC. We strongly encourage the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Group in some form, because only a legally binding multilateral instrument will have a lasting and permanent effect.

As regards antipersonnel mines, Croatia is pleased with the progress the Ottawa Convention has made on the road to universalization, which, in our opinion, is the only proof needed to confirm that the Convention has set a new international norm on the issue of anti-personnel mines. Croatia feels that the work of the Convention has shown marked success in certain areas like stockpile destruction, while in others, notably assistance in the rehabilitation of mine victims, it needs stronger commitment at both the national and international levels. Financial assistance to mine victims has been stagnant during the previous two years, which, in view of the increase in the total number of those injured by anti-personnel mines, is reason for great concern.

As co-chair of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance of the Ottawa Convention, Croatia is determined not only to follow the guidelines set by former co-chairs, but also to promote new measures and encourage new steps to increase direct communication between possible donors and

recipients. Even more importantly, Croatia wishes to re-affirm the responsibility of all actors engaged in mine action, both State parties and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to ensure all necessary support — institutional and financial, symbolic and substantive — for the full rehabilitation and re-integration of survivors of land mines.

On the issue of conventional weapons, Croatia welcomes the successful completion of negotiations by the coordinator of the Group of Governmental Experts on a protocol on explosive remnants of war and fully supports the request that this document become legally binding for all countries wishing to accede to it.

Moreover, even though Croatia firmly believes that the prime responsibility for clearing explosive remnants of war lies with the country that deployed those weapons, we also accept the solution contained in the protocol whereby the country that deployed the explosive ordnance would cooperate closely with the country in control of the contaminated territory in eventual clearance operations.

On small arms and light weapons, as a country that has experienced war and its dark legacy at first hand, Croatia has been able to make practical use of the plethora of international instruments dealing with small arms and light weapons. Croatia supports and actively participates in the work of the Stability Pact's Regional Implementation Plan on Combating the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, including with the South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC). Even though Croatia's role in the work of the Clearinghouse is becoming more advisory than participatory, we believe that it provides an excellent forum in which South-Eastern European countries can meet and exchange information on small arms and light weapons issues, as well as being a focal point in which donors can initiate programmes needed in the region. Last week, Croatia hosted the Regional Steering Group meeting of the Clearinghouse.

Croatia is also the host of another very successful Stability Pact project, the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre (RACVIAC), established in Zagreb through the joint efforts of Croatia and Germany.

Finally, let me close with some observations on the issue of the Conference on Disarmament. Croatia would like to express its deep dissatisfaction with the fact that the Conference on Disarmament, the only multilateral negotiating body devoted to arms control and disarmament, has been unable to agree on a programme of work and commence negotiations on the substantive questions on its agenda for over seven years.

Croatia cannot agree with the calls for linking or conditioning the start of negotiations on priority issues, such as a fissile material cut-off treaty, with other items on the Conference on Disarmament's agenda. The Conference should start work on those areas in which agreement already exists, while working towards gaining consensus on other issues, such as the prevention of an arms race in outer space, where the climate for full negotiations is not yet ripe.

Furthermore, Croatia would like to reiterate its disappointment that no progress has yet been made on the issue of enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament. We are discouraged with the unwillingness of several Conference member States to even consider opening the doors of the Conference to those of us who are willing to make active and positive contributions to debates relating to global disarmament questions. Croatia stands second behind Greece on the overall chronological list of countries waiting to enter the Conference on Disarmament and believes that, when the time comes, it should be the first country from its regional group to be offered membership.

The Chairman: Again, before giving the floor to the next speaker, I would plead with representatives to conduct their informal consultations in a way that will not make this too unruly a venue, and to extend respect to their fellow representatives when they deliver their national statements.

Mr. Al-Malki (Bahrain) *(spoke in Arabic)*: At the outset, allow me to extend to you, Sir, my sincere congratulations on your election as Chairman of the First Committee for this year. I have no doubt that, given your wisdom and skill, you will successfully guide the work of the Committee and achieve the objectives that we all have aspired to bring about. I am pleased also to congratulate the others members of the Bureau on the assumption of their new posts and wish them every success.

I should like to take this opportunity also to commend the comprehensive statement made by the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs.

We all are in agreement as to the increasing danger posed by the race to acquire weapons of all kinds. Weapons are not only a means of defence, they are also a means of sowing death and destruction if they are abused. In that connection, my delegation would like to express its deep concern at attempts by terrorists to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

My country has acceded to numerous international treaties and conventions on weapons of all kinds, on the basis of its staunch belief in the importance of cooperation with the international community in that context and in full awareness of the lofty objectives at stake.

The developments that have taken place in 2003 in some parts of the world have deepened our concern about the possibility of the use of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons by some States or non-State entities. My delegation therefore recognizes that universality and full and active compliance with multilateral agreements or agreements under negotiation are powerful tools that will allow us to reduce the use and proliferation of such weapons. In that connection, my delegation would like to express its regret at the fact that no agreement was reached concerning the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament.

The goal of establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East remains only a dream because of Israel, which continues to refuse to subject its nuclear facilities to the safeguards and control regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The blatant act of aggression perpetrated by Israel on our sisterly country, Syria, a few days ago — which we fully condemn — makes clear once again that the possession of such weapons by a Government that lacks the language of peace could draw the entire region into a war that would have very serious consequences.

At a time when super-Powers are effecting reductions in strategic assault weapons in the belief that such measures will contribute to the promotion of international peace and security, the problem remains of other countries seeking to acquire such weapons, including countries in the Gulf region, which is for us a continual source of concern.

In conclusion, international cooperation for arms control is the only means of ensuring an international community in which peace and prosperity prevail.

The Chairman: Let me reiterate that I expect representatives to respect each other's statements and to conduct their informal consultations in such a way that this body retains the kind of dignity that we all wish it to have.

Mr. Chaimongkol (Thailand): Sir, on behalf of the delegation of Thailand, I should like to join other speakers in congratulating you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I am confident that, under your dynamic and wise leadership, the First Committee will be able to achieve concrete results and contribute to the promotion of disarmament and international security.

May I take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Kiwanuka of Uganda, and to Mr. Dhanapala for their tireless contributions to multilateral disarmament. I should like also to welcome and congratulate Mr. Abe, a fellow Asian, on his appointment as the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs.

Thailand would like to associate itself with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) statement, to be delivered by Myanmar.

It is unfortunate that, despite all of our combined efforts at promoting disarmament and non-proliferation, the world is not a safer place today than it was a year ago, when we last convened. The challenges to disarmament and non-proliferation, and indeed to international security, which is the ultimate goal of disarmament and non-proliferation, have grown.

New threats, or, as the Secretary-General calls them,

> "old threats in new and dangerous combinations: new forms of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction" *(see A/58/PV.7)*,

show no signs of abating. Old threats — from the presence of nuclear weapons to the excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons, from weapons of mass destruction to antipersonnel mines — remain unresolved.

In parallel with this rise in threats and challenges to disarmament and non-proliferation is a gradual erosion in the foundation of multilateralism and multilateral disarmament frameworks.

Despite recent accessions to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the announced withdrawal of a State party from the NPT clearly goes against the trend towards universality of the NPT, which has long served as the cornerstone for promoting nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

The continued impasse in the Conference on Disarmament; the failure of the Disarmament Commission to agree to any recommendations this past spring; and the inability of the Open-ended Working Group on the fourth special session on disarmament (SSOD IV) to agree on the objectives and agenda of SSOD IV show signs of strain in multilateral disarmament frameworks.

Those developments raise the following question: Is there a fundamental flaw in the existing multilateral frameworks, and, if so, should we search for other alternatives?

It is the firm belief of my delegation that, despite their perceived shortcomings, multilateralism and multilateral disarmament frameworks have served as a strong foundation for disarmament and non-proliferation efforts for decades, thus contributing to international security. Indeed, in a globalized world, in which the security concerns of all States are ultimately intertwined, meeting the challenges of disarmament and non-proliferation is too heavy a burden for any one State or group of States to bear alone.

Multilateralism and multilateral disarmament frameworks are thus the only realistically viable long-term alternatives for addressing disarmament and non-proliferation challenges globally and effectively. Therefore, rather than discard multilateralism, we should work together to make the best of what we have. Granted, the international community will have to strive to strengthen multilateral disarmament frameworks and instruments. Here the issue of compliance is central to the effective functioning of multilateral disarmament regimes, but compliance must be applied to all aspects of multilateral disarmament agreements.

Universalization of multilateral disarmament instruments is also important, and cooperation between States, including appropriate technical and financial assistance, is essential to enable all States to have the requisite capability to fulfil their obligations.

Nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation should be addressed with a renewed sense of urgency. We wish to see the measures adopted in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference pursued effectively by the nuclear-weapon States and look forward to substantive preparations in the upcoming third session of the Preparatory Committee to lay the groundwork for a results-oriented 2005 NPT Review Conference. Thailand welcomes the recent ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by Algeria and other States and is accelerating efforts to ratify the CTBT, hopefully, by 2004. In the meantime, Thailand is committed to development of the CTBT verification regime and is in intensive consultations to establish two monitoring stations in the country. Thailand supports the strengthened safeguard system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and is considering concluding and signing the additional protocol to the safeguards agreement with the IAEA in 2004.

On the issue of nuclear safety and security, Thailand is preparing to cooperate fully with the Agency and Member States in implementing IAEA activities in this field, especially on capacity-building and preparedness in South-East Asia.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones are an important instrument in disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. We, therefore, renew our call to all States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to support and respect the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and similar nuclear-weapon-free zones elsewhere.

In view of the heightened threat that weapons of mass destruction pose to all peoples, especially if they are in the hands of terrorist groups, States should strengthen their cooperation, particularly through existing relevant international conventions.

In this connection, Thailand ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention at the end of last year and participated in the First Review Conference in May as a State party. To promote universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, Thailand hosted the Regional Workshop on the Universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention in March this year. We are also preparing, with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, to co-host the Regional Workshop on Assistance and Protection in Bangkok in March 2004.

Thailand is also concerned with the threat posed by the transhipment of weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and dual-use goods. We are therefore dealing with this threat through existing stringent import-export laws and other measures, including the Container Security Initiative undertaken in cooperation with key partners, which should become effective by 2004.

Small arms and light weapons kill more than half a million people each year, according to the Department for Disarmament Affairs. Thailand, therefore, supports the active implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and has undertaken many measures at the national, regional and global levels to help combat the threat posed by the excessive accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons. Thailand welcomes the successful conclusion of the first biennial meeting, chaired by Japan.

In recognition of the importance of this issue, Thailand participated in the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Tracing Small Arms and Light Weapons, and hopes that the Group's recommendations will be taken up in this Committee.

Human security across the globe is threatened daily by anti-personnel mines. In addition to the toll on human life and well-being, anti-personnel mines are also an obstacle to sustainable development, as they exclude people from access to areas of potential economic benefit. It is thus in the interests of humanity that we should redouble our efforts to create a mine-free world and assist mine victims through partnerships between States, international, regional and non-governmental organizations and civil society. In that regard, Thailand is proud to have hosted the fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction last month in Bangkok, the first time ever in Asia.

As the current President of the Convention, we look forward to working closely with States and all relevant actors in achieving the Convention's core humanitarian objectives: mine clearance, stockpile destruction, victim assistance and universalization. We hope that the momentum created by the fifth Meeting in Bangkok will result in yet another success at the First Review Conference to be held next year in Nairobi, Kenya.

This year, Thailand will be submitting the traditional draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction", agenda item 73 (p). We sincerely hope that this draft resolution will continue to receive the overwhelming support of the First Committee and, therefore, we take this opportunity to invite all States that have not already done so to co-sponsor the draft resolution.

Lastly, my delegation supports the Chairman's initiative to engage in an informal exchange of views on how to improve the working methods of the First Committee. An interactive dialogue among all stakeholders on how to make our Committee more effective and relevant to address the emerging challenges to disarmament and non-proliferation and even to multilateralism itself, is in all our interests. At the same time, we should realize that this exercise is only a means to an end — to accelerate the momentum of disarmament and non-proliferation. We, therefore, hope that all delegations will approach this initiative with an open mind and work together so that this initiative will bear fruit.

Mr. M'beou (Togo) (*spoke in French*): Permit me to join all previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to chair the First Committee and to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. I can assure you of the full cooperation of the delegation of Togo. I also wish to congratulate Mr. Nobuyasu Abe on his appointment as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs.

Peace and security are two concepts that are so intimately related that one wonders which one proceeds the other. Peace results from a state of security, and security ensues from a climate of peace. This is to say that one cannot speak of peace in the world while peoples and nations live on a daily basis under the threat of weapons of mass destruction and of small arms and light weapons — all devices that cause insecurity, death and devastation, that we must control, if we cannot eliminate their use.

The events that are taking place in the world today, particularly the increase in terrorism, should lead us to further commit ourselves to general and

complete disarmament, if we wish to spare mankind new and untold suffering.

At a time when hundreds of millions of people of the world are living in poverty, how can we accept that approximately $800 thousand million were spent in 2002 on the manufacture and purchase of weapons? Rather than multiply the number of conferences that speak of peace, security and terrorism, would it not be better to put an end to the manufacture of weapons of all types and to devote part of that money to help people who are dying of hunger and disease? At a time where countries are manufacturing increasingly sophisticated and deadly weapons, as we are, unfortunately, forced to note, we should not be surprised to see that the Conference on Disarmament is still deadlocked 25 years after its creation.

For our part, we believe that the best way to ensure peace is to put an end to the arms race and not develop more sophisticated weapons and make them available to terrorists or others, who use them not to defend themselves but to attack, destroy and kill innocent persons. Having made peace and security his Government's guiding theme, the head of State of Togo has never spared his efforts to help bring about peace on the African continent, wherever peace has been threatened. That is why the foreign policy of Togo emphasizes the peaceful settlement of conflicts and relations of friendship and good neighbourliness with neighbouring countries and with countries far from us. In that context, Togo has worked towards the adoption of the Protocols on Non-Aggression and Mutual Assistance in Defence signed by member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1978 and 1981. Togo has also worked to achieve the effective implementation of the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa.

To show its resolve in fighting against those types of weapons, which spread terror and aggrieve many families, the Government of Togo has established a national commission to fight against the proliferation and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. The commission has already seized and destroyed hundreds of weapons and thousands of hunting munitions. All of these actions show the will to ensure that West Africa is a zone of peace, which is a prelude to the true economic integration of our States. It is this commitment to peace and security for all that has led to the honour bestowed on Togo to host the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa.

Created in 1986, in implementation of General Assembly resolution 40/151 G dated 16 December 1985, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa has undertaken intensive efforts to achieve the objectives for which it was created: to promote peace, to control arms and to ensure disarmament in the region, as well as to coordinate regional activities conducted in Africa in the framework of the World Disarmament Campaign (WDC).

We are pleased to note that the Centre continues to fulfil its mission, despite its many difficulties and in particular its financial problems. The Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa was created to operate using voluntary contributions, which are unfortunately not regular and do not allow the Centre to cover its operational or its administrative expenses.

In his report on the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (A/58/139), the Secretary-General states that

> "the Centre has continued its vigorous efforts in fund-raising to allow the revitalization of its programme of activities. Notwithstanding these efforts, the Centre's capacity to deliver on its programme of work and to respond to the numerous and ever-increasing requests by Member States of the African region remains limited owing to the acute insufficiency of human, material and financial resources." (*A/58/139, para. 3*)

In the view of our delegation, this ambitious work programme for peace, security and disarmament should be able to enjoy the support of the international community as a whole. We wish, here, to convey the sincere congratulations and the deep gratitude of the Government of Togo to the countries, organizations and foundations that have supported the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa in Lomé. At the same time, we invite others of good will to support the Centre, which defends the cause of international peace and security.

In its report in document A/56/817, the Office of Internal Oversight Services noted that,

> "Given that the viability of the regional centres is constantly threatened by a shortage of voluntary contributions, and that their good work and usefulness are consistently recognized by the General Assembly, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs should request that operational support activities of the centres be financed, as required in each individual case, from the regular budget." (*A/56/817, para. 94*)

Last year, on the basis of that recommendation, Togo's delegation, on the occasion of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 57/87 on the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament, declared that, instead of continuing each year to simply update previous resolutions concerning these centres, it was important, more than ever before, to work towards having all of the expenditures of the regional centres included in the regular United Nations budget. This statement is still timely, and the need to act to that end is even more pressing, given the difficulties faced by these centres in implementing their programmes of action. In so doing, we would show our true support for the objectives of the United Nations in the area of arms control and disarmament, as well as our appreciation of the role played by the regional centres. But, while we wait for this wish to become a reality, the delegation of Togo will, this year once again, co-sponsor a draft resolution on the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNRCPDA), which will be introduced by the African Group. We would like to thank the members of the First Committee in advance for the support they will lend to the resolution this year, as they have done before.

The delegation of Togo will also support any draft resolution that promotes disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In conclusion, Togo believes that universal adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) constitutes an essential precondition for nuclear disarmament. We therefore appeal to States that have not yet done so to become parties to that Treaty, which remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. In like manner, it invites States that intend to conduct a nuclear arms programme to refrain from doing so in the interest of preserving peace and security for present and future generations. Disarmament must, notwithstanding, be effective and must include manufacturers of weapons as well as purchasers, and cover all types of weapons.

Mr. Bennouna (Morocco) *(spoke in French)*: First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your chairmanship of our Committee and to ensure you that you will enjoy the full support of my delegation. My congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau. I also take this opportunity to pay homage to Mr. Danaphala for the considerable work he carried out during his mandate, and to welcome Mr. Nobuyasu Abe and congratulate him on his appointment as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. I look forward to fruitful cooperation between the Under-Secretary-General and his team and the Moroccan delegation.

The challenges we now face in terms of disarmament and international security are complex and difficult to fully define. Since the creation of our Organization, Member States have had a common vision of collective security that is based on the principles contained in the United Nations Charter. Article 51 of the United Nations Charter states that those States that are threatened by armed aggression can exercise their right to self-defence. Of course, those States that exercise legitimate self-defence must have that legitimacy confirmed by the United Nations. Today, some States, based on their own perception of their national security interests, question this agreed interpretation and reserve the right to use unilateral force. Such a step could lead to an increased unilateral use of force and represents a major threat to the international community.

As the Secretary-General wisely said in his report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration,

> "The great strength of the United Nations remains its legitimacy, founded on the bedrock principles of international law accepted by all States and expressed in the decisions of an Organization which represents the entire international community. In the international arena there is no substitute for such legitimacy. It is essential, therefore, that the actual conduct of international affairs be in conformity with these principles." (*A/58/323, para. 13*)

We must subscribe to the point of view that the Secretary-General expressed in his report and reiterated from the rostrum of the General Assembly on 23 September. Certainly, nothing can replace the norms of international law. Only respect for those norms by all parties can enable us to save the world from the

agonies of war and chaos. That does not rule out making adjustments to strengthen the norms of international law.

Among the new challenges that the world must face, we have to mention the risk of non-State entities acquiring nuclear arms or other weapons of mass destruction. There is currently no effective multilateral instrument that enables us to meet that threat. Of course, it is possible to question the reality of such a threat, which is, by its nature, difficult to assess. However, we can also legitimately ask ourselves whether an international security system based on the possession of nuclear weapons by a limited number of States is not also dangerous in itself. Certainly, only the complete elimination of nuclear weapons can be a truly effective solution to ultimately meet that threat, through the adoption of concrete, internationally verifiable disarmament measures.

However, little progress has been achieved in recent years with regard to disarmament, particularly in the nuclear field. Moreover, we have noted with concern the pursuit of research aimed at producing new generations of nuclear weapons and the development of military doctrines that include the possible use of nuclear weapons in conventional theatres of operation. We also note with regret that, with the notable exception of the Moscow Treaty concluded on 23 May 2002 between the United States and the Russian Federation on the reduction of their strategic nuclear weapons, little progress has been achieved. That is also the case with the Comprehensive-Test-Ban Treaty, whose negotiation required so much energy and whose conclusion aroused such hope, and which still has not entered into force.

In the light of such facts, it is urgent that we reinforce existing international instruments by working actively for their preservation and strengthening. We must also revitalize multilateralism as the principal international negotiating mode in the area of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. In that regard, the Kingdom of Morocco, as a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), attaches particular importance to the entry into force of the NPT Programme of Action, adopted during the 2000 Review Conference. Similarly, Morocco calls once again for universal accession to the Treaty.

In that spirit, the Kingdom of Morocco remains deeply concerned at the situation prevailing in the Middle East. It is particularly deplorable to note that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East faces the opposition of a single State in the region — Israel, which is still not a party to the NPT and refuses to submit its nuclear installations to the generalized guarantees of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Morocco remains convinced that the best guarantee for the security of States remains not military power and the accumulation of nuclear weapons, but peaceful coexistence with neighbouring States, the strategic and irreversible choice of peace, nuclear disarmament, respect for international legality and the creation of conditions making room for development, prosperity and political, economic and social contacts.

Together with those challenges, the international community must work to fight the proliferation of ballistic missiles. In that context, the Kingdom of Morocco welcomed the conclusion, in November 2002 at The Hague, of a Code of Conduct aimed at fighting ballistic missile proliferation. My country, which has subscribed to the Code, believes it to be a first step towards the conclusion of a binding international instrument to fight such proliferation.

The Kingdom of Morocco, which participates actively in the maintenance of international peace and security on the African continent, notes with concern the deadly consequences of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Indeed, the number of victims of small arms and light weapons has continued to increase in recent years: 500,000 deaths per year, of which 300,000 are in armed conflicts. My country welcomes the encouraging results achieved in the context of the follow-up to the Programme of Action on Small Arms. Determined to continue its activities aimed at general and complete disarmament, Morocco — which is party to the Convention on Conventional Weapons, particularly its Protocol II on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby Traps and Other Devices, as modified in 1996 — will continue to follow those issues with particular interest.

Among the principal challenges that must be met by the international community, we must also mention international terrorism. The Kingdom of Morocco, which was the target of barbaric terrorist attacks in

May, wishes to reaffirm here its firm resolve to continue to contribute to international efforts aimed at the fight against terrorism. Such acts will not in any way weaken my country's attachment to its democratic choices and to the values of freedom and tolerance that it cherishes.

The maintenance of international peace and security also depends on the strengthening of regional and subregional cooperation. Morocco has made its strategic choice based on conviction and participates actively in the consolidation of peace and security in the Mediterranean region and in building a Maghreb regional group that is stable and respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its five member States.

Restoring multilateralism in disarmament negotiations requires a revitalization of the relevant United Nations bodies. The work of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) has been deadlocked for seven years. My country fully supports the current efforts by Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi of Japan aimed at reaching an agreement on the Conference's programme of work and enabling the CD to begin substantive work during its next session. The Moroccan delegation reiterates that the nuclear disarmament issue must be considered as a priority by the Conference on Disarmament. Likewise, my country favours an immediate opening of negotiations on prohibition of the production of fissile material.

With regard to the First Committee, the Chairman has indicated his wish to begin a process of informal consultations aimed at streamlining our working methods. The Moroccan delegation is prepared to participate in those consultations constructively and in the spirit of dialogue. Such an exercise will not conflict with the revitalization efforts being undertaken in a more general way by the General Assembly. In our view, those efforts are complementary. Morocco, faithful to the founding principles of the Non-Aligned Movement — particularly with regard to the need to promote general and complete disarmament — will support the Committee's efforts to achieve a consensual result on improving the First Committee's working methods. That is in the interests of all Member States.

Mr. Mya Than (Myanmar): I have the honour and privilege to take the floor on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and my own country, Myanmar.

At the outset, I wish to express our warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your unanimous election as Chairman of the First Committee. We also pay tribute to the other members of the Bureau. We are pleased and proud to see Mr. Suriya Chindawongse, a diplomat from Thailand and an ASEAN colleague, serving on the Bureau. We, the ASEAN delegates, are fully confident that under your able leadership and skilful guidance our deliberations will come to a successful conclusion. I assure you of the fullest cooperation and support of the ASEAN delegations.

The adoption of the Millennium Declaration by all Member States of the General Assembly is of the utmost importance, reflecting the commitments made by our heads of State and Government at the Millennium Summit held in 2000. We should therefore redouble our efforts to translate those commitments into reality, especially in the field of disarmament and international security. We, the ASEAN countries, reaffirm our resolve to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, and to keep all options open for achieving that aim, including the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers.

The ASEAN countries share the view that the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons is a very important contribution to the international community's efforts to achieve peace and security. It is the conviction of the ASEAN countries that, in the light of recent political developments, conditions now exist for the establishment of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The ASEAN countries reaffirm the unanimous conclusion of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996 that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, under strict and effective international control. In that regard, we, the ASEAN countries, continue to support and intend to co-sponsor the draft resolution tabled every year by Malaysia reaffirming that important ruling.

For a number of years, the ASEAN countries have co-sponsored the yearly draft resolution initiated by Myanmar calling upon the nuclear-weapon States to stop immediately the qualitative improvement, development, production and stockpiling of nuclear warheads and their delivery systems. The draft resolution urges the nuclear-weapon States, as an interim measure, to de-alert and deactivate immediately their nuclear weapons and to take other concrete measures to further reduce the operational status of their nuclear weapon systems. It also calls for the convening of an international conference on nuclear disarmament in all its aspects at an early date to identify and deal with concrete measures for nuclear disarmament.

Those two draft resolutions are part of the ASEAN members' contributions to the cause of disarmament. This year, Malaysia and Myanmar, with the support of ASEAN and other sponsors, will retable those draft resolutions. It is our ardent hope that the draft resolutions will enjoy broader support and increased sponsorship.

The ASEAN countries have consistently stressed the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). We reiterate our call on nuclear-weapon States to make further efforts towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

In that context, we welcome the convening of the Third Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT in Vienna in September 2003. We also welcome the adoption by the Conference of the twelve concrete measures contained in the Final Declaration of the Conference to promote an early entry-into-force of the CTBT. We are encouraged that to date three nuclear-weapon States have ratified that important treaty. We welcome the ratification of the Treaty by Algeria — one of the countries listed in Annex 2 to the Treaty — and the ratifications by Afghanistan, Albania, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Kuwait, Mauritania and Oman in the past year. We also urge all States, particularly the remaining nuclear-weapon States, to ratify the CTBT as soon as possible.

We welcome the positive outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and note with satisfaction that preparations are under way for the 2005 Review Conference. The ASEAN countries particularly welcome the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament, to which all States parties are committed under article VI of the Treaty. We reiterate our view that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We therefore call once again for the full and effective implementation of the steps set out in the Final Document of the Review Conference. In that connection, we reaffirm our conviction that there exists an urgent need for the nuclear-weapon States to take concrete measures to fulfil their obligations under the NPT, in particular article VI on nuclear disarmament and article IV to provide technical assistance in the application of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes to non-nuclear weapon States.

We note with appreciation the preparatory work by the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the NPT, held in New York in April 2002, and its second session, held in Geneva in April and May 2003.

We believe that the third session of the Preparatory Committee, to be held in New York in April and May 2004, will be of crucial importance, as it will deal with substantive issues. In that regard, we welcome and support the candidature of Ambassador Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat of Indonesia as Chairman-designate for the third session of the Preparatory Committee. We call upon the third session of the Preparatory Committee to undertake substantive work to lay the groundwork for the 2005 NPT Review Conference.

In that regard, we emphasize the need for Preparatory Committee meetings to continue to allocate specific times for deliberations on nuclear disarmament, implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and security assurances.

We share the view that there is an urgent need for a comprehensive approach towards missiles in a balanced and non-discriminatory manner, as a contribution to international peace and security. We note that a Panel of Governmental Experts was established pursuant of General Assembly resolution 55/33 A to consider the issue of missiles in all its aspects. We also take note of the Secretary-General's

report on the views of Member States on the subject, as requested in General Assembly resolution 57/71.

We continue to believe that concerns related to missile proliferation are best addressed through multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory agreements.

We also note that the entry into force of the Moscow Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions between the Russian Federation and the United States of America is a step towards reducing their deployed strategic nuclear weapons. The Treaty should be implemented in accordance with the principles of irreversibility and transparency.

We recall that the 34th Ministerial Meeting of ASEAN noted the progress that has been made in the negotiation of a protocol on the verification of the Biological Weapon Convention (BWC). We note the adoption of the Final Document of the Fifth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, held in Geneva in November 2002. We also take note of the decision that the States parties should meet annually in the lead-up to the Sixth Review Conference in 2006 and that the meeting of experts should be held prior to each annual meeting. In that connection, we welcome the convening of the first meeting of experts from States parties to the BWC in Geneva in August 2003 and express our hope that the first annual meeting of the States parties, to be convened in Geneva in November 2003, will make progress in our efforts to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention.

The ASEAN countries welcome the convening of the first Biennial Meeting of States on the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, held in New York in July 2003. The Biennial Meeting undertook an evaluation of the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We take note of the comprehensive and intensive discussions that took place at the Biennial Meeting on such important issues as weapons collection and destruction; marking and tracing; export and import control; capacity-building for implementation; research; institution-building; and human security. We note with appreciation the work carried out by the Group of Governmental Experts on Tracing Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

We call upon Member States and the international community to take appropriate measures to ensure the implementation of the Programme of Action. We also join the call made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on Member States to redouble their efforts to work on a ban on supplying small arms to non-State actors.

We take note of the convening of the fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 15 to 19 September 2003, the first time the meeting was held in Asia. We call upon the international community to provide the necessary assistance to mine-affected countries to ensure that they have access to material, equipment and technology, as well as financial resources for mine clearance, and to provide increased humanitarian assistance for the victims of landmines.

We strongly believe that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones under the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba is a positive step towards attaining the objective of global nuclear disarmament. In this regard, we welcome the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned.

Through sustained efforts, the ASEAN countries have successfully established a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia. The Treaty on South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone entered into force on 27 March 1997. A protocol is annexed to the Treaty for accession by the nuclear-weapon States. In welcoming the announcement by China at the ASEAN-China Summit in November 2002 of its readiness to accede to the protocol, we wish to reiterate our call to the other nuclear-weapon States to accede to the protocol as soon as possible.

We welcome the progress in the implementation of the Treaty and stress the importance of direct consultations between ASEAN and the five nuclear-weapon States. We consider this to be significant progress towards encouraging the accession of the nuclear-weapon States to the protocol to the Treaty.

We also welcome the agreement at the expert level among Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on the text of a treaty to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

The emergence of a Central Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone will further increase the number of nuclear-weapon-free regions of the world, and contribute to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the convening of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We reaffirm the continuing validity and relevance of the provisions of the Final Document of that special session.

We reiterate once again our support for the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We again express our deep concern about the lack of consensus in the deliberations held by the Disarmament Commission in 1999 on the agenda and objectives of the special session. We repeat our call for further steps leading to the convening of the fourth special session, with the participation of all States Members of the United Nations, as well as the need for that special session to review and assess the implementation of the outcome of the first special session, while reaffirming its principles and priorities.

We note the historic Declaration of ASEAN Concord II, issued by the heads of State or Government of the ASEAN countries at the ninth ASEAN Summit, held in Bali, Indonesia, from 7 to 8 October 2003. The heads of State or Government of the ASEAN countries agreed to establish an ASEAN community that would be supported by the three pillars of political and security cooperation, economic cooperation, and socio-cultural cooperation. These would be closely intertwined and mutually reinforcing in an effort to achieve peace, stability and prosperity. They agreed that through this effort they would achieve closer and mutually beneficial integration among the ASEAN member countries and their peoples. They also agreed to continue their efforts to promote regional peace and stability, security, development and prosperity with a view to realizing a dynamic and resilient ASEAN community. To this end, they adopted a framework for the ASEAN community through the establishment of the ASEAN Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. They also agreed to request the ministers to implement the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II.

They also agreed that members of the ASEAN Security Community would rely exclusively on peaceful means in the settlement of intra-regional differences and that they regarded their security needs as being fundamentally linked and determined by geographical location and a common vision and objectives. The ASEAN Security Community, recognizing the sovereign right of the member countries to pursue their individual foreign policies and defence arrangements and taking into account the strong interconnection among political, economic and social realities, would subscribe to the principle of comprehensive security based on broad political, economic, social and cultural aspects arising from ASEAN Vision 2020, rather than on defence pacts, military alliances or a joint foreign policy.

The ASEAN Security Community is open and outward-looking with respect to actively engaging ASEAN's friends and dialogue partners to promote peace and stability in the region, and will build on the ASEAN Regional Forum to facilitate consultation and cooperation between ASEAN and its friends and partners on regional security matters.

The ASEAN countries continue to attach special importance to confidence-building efforts among the countries in the region. ASEAN has been steadfastly undertaking concrete measures to enhance regional security through various initiatives in the ASEAN Regional Forum.

We note the positive developments in the ASEAN Regional Forum process through inter-session activities and linkages between track I and track II. We take note with satisfaction the fruitful discussions and exchange of views that took place at the tenth ASEAN Regional Forum held in Phnom Penh in June 2003. We are particularly encouraged that the tenth ASEAN Regional Forum placed importance on, among other things, strengthening the implementation of the nine recommendations endorsed by the ninth ASEAN Regional Forum; continuing work on confidence-building measures as the foundation of the Regional Forum process; implementing the concept and principles of preventive diplomacy; making the fight against international terrorism and transnational crime a priority of current Forum cooperation; and enhancing the role of the Forum chairmanship, including interaction with other regional and international organizations.

We also note with satisfaction the level of confidence and trust that had been developed under the auspices of the ASEAN Regional Forum and with

regard to the activities in the overlapping areas between confidence-building measures and preventive diplomacy that the Forum has begun to undertake.

We reaffirm the importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. We are, however, disappointed and concerned by the continuing impasse in the Conference and note with regret that it was still unable to reach an agreement on a programme of work at its 2003 session. It is our hope that the States concerned will demonstrate their commitment to the process of disarmament and exercise their political will to overcome this deadlock and reach an amicable solution in the near future.

We also note that, during the 2003 annual session, successive presidents of the Conference conducted intensive consultations with a view to reaching consensus on the programme of work.

The ASEAN countries believe the expansion of the Conference on Disarmament is necessary and we fully endorse the application of Thailand and the Philippines.

We wish to take this opportunity to express, once again, our appreciation to the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Africa for their valid contribution towards international peace and security. Regional seminars and forums organized by those Centres effectively contribute to the progress of the ongoing security and disarmament process in those regions.

In particular, we highly appreciate and fully support the dynamic activities in the region by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, which has made substantial contributions to the security dialogue and raised awareness of disarmament issues.

We renew our commitment to multilateralism as an important means of pursuing and achieving our common objectives in the field of disarmament and our determination to further promote multilateralism in this field.

It is now more urgent than ever for us, the international community, to strive for international peace and security and redouble our efforts towards — and live up to our commitment to — the goal of creating a nuclear-weapon-free world. We, the ASEAN countries, once again reaffirm our commitments to work cooperatively to achieve these goals as a matter of utmost priority.

Mr. Pak (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): On behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, I would like, first of all, to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election as Chair of the First Committee. I am also confident that your diplomatic skill and rich experiences will make a positive contribution to our deliberations.

Today, international peace and security is being threatened as never before. At the same time, global disarmament efforts are faced with serious challenges. Military threats and the use of force based on unilateralism are openly perpetrated. Attempts to hold onto nuclear supremacy and control of world politics through nuclear threats are undisguised. Consequently, the doctrine of pre-emptive nuclear strikes, which has supplanted the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, is now being put into practice.

Thirty-five years ago, nuclear-weapon States committed themselves, when they supported nuclear non-proliferation, to abolishing their nuclear weapons in the shortest possible span of time. This is the keystone of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

However, the nuclear super-Power is developing new types of nuclear weapons and is even today expanding the nuclear arms race into space, neglecting the abolition of nuclear weapons. As a result, the nuclear super-Power has realized a nuclear monopoly and misused the NPT to blackmail non-nuclear-weapon States with its nuclear weapons. It is not acceptable that one would advocate nuclear non-proliferation while accumulating nuclear weapons and seeking to improve these weapons.

In order to achieve substantial disarmament and ensure lasting peace on Earth, the international community should prioritize its tasks on the basis of a precise analysis of today's global reality.

My delegation regards the core issue of disarmament as nuclear disarmament and the fundamental task in achieving nuclear disarmament as getting the nuclear super-Power really abandon its policy of nuclear threats.

The advent of high-handedness and unilateralism caused the disarmament process, which had begun to

move forward only in the nineties, to derail from its track at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Practical disarmament of any kind can never be expected in the existing nuclear weapons environment and the continued nuclear arms race on our planet.

It is important for the United Nations to give a timely warning against unilateralism, which has recently been more pronounced and exceeds all limits. In this respect, my delegation feels it is necessary to convene the special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament at the earliest possible date. The failure to convene the special session in spite of repeated calls by a large number of the United Nations Member States is in itself a threat to peace.

The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula — the international focus today — is also an outcome of unilateral power politics aimed at eventually changing the existing political system. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is threatened by the nuclear super-Power's persistent attempts to stifle us. We demand that the United States change its hostile policy toward the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This is essential for peace and security on the Korean peninsula. The key to the solution of the nuclear issue is for the United States to change its hostile policy toward the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Six-party talks were held in Beijing in late August thanks to my country's reasonable demands and our positive and flexible efforts. But we did not perceive a sincere attitude on the part of the United States, aimed at a resolution of the nuclear issue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States.

It is our consistent position to resolve the nuclear issue peacefully through dialogue and negotiation. The peaceful solution of the nuclear issue between my country and the United States is inseparably related to security on the Korean peninsula and in the region.

Dialogue and threats cannot be compatible. The present reality clearly shows that an abandonment of the hostile policy aimed at stifling the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is indispensable for peace and co-existence in the region.

It is thanks to our deterrent force that peace on the Korean peninsula and in the region can be defended. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's songun policy, which is a policy of independence that deters war and maintains strategic balance and stability. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will exert every effort to remove the threat of outside forces and to guarantee lasting peace on the Korean peninsula, both now and in the future.

Mr. Cheibani (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, as previous distinguished delegates have done, to express my delegation's pleasure at your election as Chairman of the First Committee, the Committee on Disarmament and International Security. I would like to warmly congratulate the newly appointed Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Nobuyasu Abe. You can be assured of the full support of the delegation of Mali, and we hope that, at the end of this session, we will have made a decisive step forward towards achieving our noble goal.

The relevance of this Committee's contribution to disarmament and to reinforcing international peace and security is beyond doubt. To ensure that the Committee continues to be relevant and credible, the Committee should, we believe, at this session, adopt useful and concrete recommendations on the major issues on our agenda. And here, my delegation would like to make the following comments.

With respect to small arms, the illicit trafficking and excessive stockpiling of small arms and light weapons and their disastrous impact on the civilian population are a major source of concern and undermine the very underpinnings of socio-economic development. My country realized a long time ago the negative impact of this phenomenon and bases its position on the initiatives — both at the international and regional levels — that have been taken and enjoy the support of the international community.

Mali has confirmed its determination to combat the proliferation and illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons. At the first Biennial Meeting of States to consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, Mali presented a detailed report on its activities in document A/CONF.192/BMS/2003/CRP.54 of 24 June 2003.

That report assesses the efforts made at the national, subregional, regional and international levels by the national committee on the implementation of resolutions and decisions taken by the United Nations

in the context of combating the illicit proliferation of small arms, drafting and harmonizing national legislation on small arms, maintaining a national register of fire arms, securing weapon stores and ammunition dumps, controlling national frontiers and strengthening the performance capabilities of security forces. It is appropriate here also to request that the international community provide technical and financial support to the national committee.

Mali supports the French/Swiss initiative on marking and tracing small arms. Mali hopes that negotiations on an internationally legally binding instrument on the subject will start soon which will enable us to trace weapons to their source.

Owing to a number of factors, the level of security of populations throughout the world has considerably deteriorated, and that is why we need to develop an international political strategy based on the notion of human security. A number of countries have worked together in the context of the Human Security Network. They are Austria, Canada, Chile, Greece, Ireland, Mali, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand, and, as an observer, South Africa. Mali has, since last May, been chairing the Network, and we have been focusing on the following areas: human rights education, children in armed conflicts, combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and gender issues in peacekeeping operations. Mali calls upon all States to join it in supporting the initiative to elaborate a framework convention on international transfer of weapons, which is to be launched in Bamako this month.

With respect to multilateralism and disarmament, I would like to stress the emphasis Mali places on multilateralism in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation. The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, on the basis of freely arrived at agreements between the States of the region concerned, should be extended to all regions of the world. This will contribute significantly to international peace and security. Similarly, there should be consensus to ensure that terrorist groups do not acquire weapons of mass destruction, and this strengthened with strict and concrete measures.

Mali would like to reassert its appeal to countries with nuclear weapons to ensure the speedy conclusion of an international legally binding instrument to guarantee the security of non-nuclear States. It's a question of transparency and good faith.

We are meeting at a moment of considerable challenges to the process of disarmament in the world. We should take advantage of the situation in order to push forward our programme of disarmament in all its aspects, from arms of mass destruction to small arms and light weapons.

Mali will, as in previous years, introduce, on behalf of the fifteen member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a draft resolution entitled "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms". We hope that this draft will enjoy the broadest support of all States.

Ms. Moteetee (Lesotho): Allow me to deliver this statement on behalf of my Ambassador, His Excellency Mr. Lebohang Moleko, who could not be here today because of reasons beyond his control.

My delegation extends its congratulations to you and other members of the Bureau on your election to steer the work of the First Committee. We are confident that, with your rich experience and able leadership, you will guide us to a successful conclusion of our work. Let me assure you of the full cooperation and support of my delegation. Let me also take this opportunity to extend sincere thanks to Mr. Maitland of South Africa, for his excellent work as the Chairman of this Committee during the last session.

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Nobuyasu Abe for his appointment as the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and express appreciation for his introductory statement that has formed a useful basis for our deliberations. Furthermore, my delegation pays tribute to the former Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, for his invaluable contribution to multilateral disarmament efforts.

My delegation welcomes the outcome of the first Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. At this juncture, let me also express my delegation's appreciation of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the feasibility of developing an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit arms

and light weapons. We are confident that this report will provide a useful tool for our deliberations on the subject. It is also our hope that the General Assembly will act upon the recommendations of the Group.

The Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho realizes the importance of bilateral, regional and international cooperation and supports all initiatives aimed at combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Lesotho is a party to the Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region, which was adopted in August 2001. Furthermore, just recently, on 24 September 2003, Lesotho deposited its instrument of accession to the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Lesotho is committed to the full implementation of these instruments. It was for the same reason that it requested its sole immediate neighbour, South Africa, to provide technical assistance that enabled the destruction, in November 2001, of 4,240 excess and redundant state-owned small arms.

There is consensus that terrorism is the greatest menace of our time. There is also little doubt, if any, that it is only through multilateral efforts that the international community can win the war against terrorism. My delegation shares the fear that, unless appropriate joint and collective measures are taken, non-State actors might acquire and use weapons of mass destruction. We can also not afford to neglect the great danger posed by conventional weapons, small arms and landmines. We therefore wish to reiterate the importance of ratifying, acceding to and fully implementing multilateral disarmament treaties, including the following to which Lesotho is a party: the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Ottawa Treaty on anti-personnel mines. We also wish to encourage all the signatories to the African Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty — the Treaty of Pelindaba — to ratify it as soon as possible. Furthermore, we appeal to all States to honour the 13 steps agreed upon at the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

Lesotho is also disappointed by the lack of progress in the Conference on Disarmament, which is the only forum of negotiation on disarmament issues. We are also very discouraged by the fact that the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission has failed to take a positive turn by advancing either nuclear disarmament or confidence-building measures in the field of disarmament.

It is very unfortunate that, even though several delegations have declared that they welcome the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, the open-ended working group that was given the mandate to consider, among other things, the objectives and agenda for the session, failed to reach consensus and expressed the need for the issue to be referred back to the General Assembly.

The year 2003 saw many setbacks in the area of disarmament, as well as an increase in threats to peace and security, and yet there is still no reason to despair. We have a number of multilateral disarmament agreements to fall back on, and our hope lies in universal adherence to, and full implementation of, those treaties.

Mr. Yap (Singapore): At the outset, please allow me to join other speakers in congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee, as well as the other members of the Bureau on their election. My delegation is confident that under your leadership, the Committee will work assiduously towards the successful completion of our work. We would like to assure you of our fullest cooperation and support. At the same time, we would like to welcome and congratulate Ambassador Nobuyasu Abe on his appointment as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and thank him for his lucid statement last week.

These are challenging times. Even as technological advances and globalization bring about rapid and positive changes to the world we live in, those same driving forces bring about new threats and vulnerabilities. Those new threats know no boundaries or nationalities. No one is immune. Everyone is vulnerable.

To many of us, 11 September 2001 was a watershed that brought to the forefront the threat of global catastrophic terrorism. Sadly, it looks likely that we will have to live with the threat of terrorism for some time to come. In the past few months alone, we

have seen tragic and despicable terrorist attacks against innocent victims from Baghdad to Jakarta and Mumbai to Riyadh. In those and other attacks, we have seen how ordinary aircraft, seacraft and vehicles can be converted into devastating bombs. But just imagine the consequences if terrorists had somehow managed to obtain and utilize weapons of mass destruction. That is not some unlikely scenario but a very real threat.

At the same time, in various parts of the world, the threat of large-scale conventional war always looms. If the parties are armed with nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, those conflicts could escalate with the deadliest of consequences. In addition, many parts of the world today are plagued by violent civil conflict. Often fuelled by the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, these conflicts kill thousands, displace many thousands more from their homes, devastate economies and frequently have secondary effects that could destabilize the surrounding region. And those are just some of the threats to international peace and security with which we have to contend.

This is the climate in which the First Committee has to work. Our work involves not some abstract problems that can be dealt with at leisure, but the most pressing challenges that can have the most severe of consequences, affecting everyone from all walks of life, regardless of nationality. Unfortunately, the gravity of our responsibilities frequently seem not to be reflected in the pace of our work, the attention we pay to an issue or in the willingness of Member States to act collectively when necessary. Indeed, one would have some difficulty in reconciling the agenda and output of the First Committee — a key multilateral forum for the consideration of disarmament and international security issues — with the urgent security concerns that the international community has today.

Many speakers before me have already touched on the issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly and reform of the work of the First Committee. It is a substantive and important issue. At a time when the continued relevance of the United Nations appears to be in doubt, there can be nothing more important than to work towards the revitalization of our Organization and to regain the confidence of our peoples in the United Nations. It is time for us to consider how we should reinvigorate this Committee and ensure that it can rise to the challenge and make a real contribution to international peace and security. This is not the first time that my delegation has sought to highlight the need for the First Committee to challenge and, if need be, rethink our existing paradigms. Those of you who remember our statements over the last few years in this very forum will recall that we have made the same point before.

However, challenging existing paradigms is never easy. Reaching consensus on how we can reinvigorate our Committee will be even harder. And even harder still will be moving beyond cosmetic reform to a real invigoration of our Committee and progress in our work. As we all know, calls for the revitalization of the General Assembly and the now clichéd suggestions for reform, such as the streamlining and rationalization of our agenda, are not new. Yet few delegations seem to have taken them on. Perhaps the necessity of the reform measures, or the need for us to deal effectively with the threats we face, has not yet sunk in. In some cases, I suspect that this is due to narrow political interests riding roughshod over the broader interests of the international community as a whole. Whatever the case, it may be that the debate has become too politically charged and has become bogged down in combative and polemical repartee.

But now, more than ever, it is vital that we not allow the process to be stymied. We should not simply go through the motions year after year but seriously address the real concerns. We should consider each issue with an open mind, based on its merits and the broader interests of the international community to which we all belong. As with almost all United Nations issues, the key ingredient to success is political will — the political will to engage in give-and-take and to exercise greater flexibility and understanding. Perhaps, if we could bear these thoughts in mind as we consider the issues in the days ahead, we can make some progress, whether on the revitalization of our Committee or on the disarmament and international security issues we deal with.

Revitalization does not only mean pursuing reform measures or new initiatives to tackle the pressing threats of our time. We should not forget that we need to consolidate and improve on our achievements and ensure that these accomplishments can stand the test of time. Taking stock of the existing disarmament regimes that we have today, I am not sure how many of them can be truly considered success stories. New initiatives should not come at the expense of efforts to entrench and effectively implement

existing regimes. In addition, we should be wary of overextending ourselves. The perfect is the enemy of the good. Instead of pursuing initiatives that may be overly idealistic or extremely divisive and instead of frittering away valuable time and resources, it may be more appropriate to take a practical approach that might enable us to move forward.

In that regard, dealing with today's complex, multifaceted security challenges will often require that we adopt a practical, multipronged and multidimensional approach. The United Nations has a vital role to play. But it is by no means the only actor or the only arena where these pressing challenges can be addressed. Where appropriate, we may need to approach challenges from various levels — whether global, regional, subregional or national — and recognize that everyone, including international and regional organizations, individual States and non-governmental organizations, has a role to play.

We can also be most effective when we tackle challenges from all angles, from strengthening international legal regimes to putting in place the stringent measures necessary to prevent terrorist attacks and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Moreover, such an approach allows the unique circumstances of each State or region to be taken into account, thereby ensuring that it leads to a truly effective and durable solution to which all States can subscribe. A practical, multipronged and multidimensional approach — whether aimed at eradicating the scourge of terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons — may well afford us the most flexibility and prove to be the most effective. Whatever the case, the United Nations role is central.

Surmounting the challenges we face will never be easy. In this new era, it has become even more critical that we intensify our efforts to ensure that those who seek to wreak death and devastation on innocent victims do not get their hands on the tools and resources they need. That is our heavy responsibility, and it is imperative that we do our best to ensure that we carry it out successfully. Let us use the weeks ahead wisely to consider how we can deal effectively with the challenges we face. That may not necessarily be something that we can accomplish over the course of this session of the General Assembly, but let us genuinely try to lay the foundations for a durable and comprehensive solution to the security challenges we face. Perhaps several years from now, we will be able to look back and claim that we have made real progress in making the world a safer place.

Mr. Gala López (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman and to assure you of the Cuban delegation's firm support for the work of the First Committee. I should also like to congratulate the rest of the members of the Bureau.

If the cold war period has supposedly been overcome, how can we explain that global military expenditures continue to increase, this year reaching in excess of $1 million, nearly half of which relate to one country? Under what justification are nuclear weapons still being created and their role strengthened in the security doctrines of certain countries? How can we explain the development of new conventional weapons of great destructive power that jeopardize the security of States and may cause irreversible environmental damage? What is the purpose of the efforts to militarize outer space? How much could be accomplished if only a portion of that colossal amount of money were invested in the quest for solutions to poverty, underdevelopment and ill health and for ways to close the gap between the richest and the poorest countries?

The emergence of a unipolar world, where only one super-Power maintains the military capacity to dominate the international arena, has established a situation in which prevail, inter alia, hegemony, direct or covert interventionism, insecurity for the weakest countries and the attempt to validate the doctrine of the pre-emptive use of force, disregarding basic principles of international law such as sovereign equality among States, self-determination, non-intervention, the non-threat or non-use of force and the peaceful settlement of disputes. That situation has been reflected in attempts to question the validity of international bodies and instruments established in the field of disarmament and arms control and to draw the international community's attention to non-proliferation to the detriment of disarmament.

Cuba is firmly convinced that the only secure and effective way to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is to achieve their total elimination. Cuba reaffirms the need to preserve multilateralism in international relations, based on the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations — an issue that was also addressed in the

Millennium Declaration. We reaffirm multilateralism as a basic principle of negotiations, not only in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, but also to resolve any other problem or concern that may arise among States parties with regard to implementing the provisions of agreements in that sphere. Such consultation and negotiation processes must be carried out by means of appropriate international procedures within the framework of the United Nations or the mechanisms of the treaties themselves in order to preserve the collective security system enshrined in the Charter. We therefore affirm that it is important for the First Committee to adopt, this year again, a draft resolution on the promotion of multilateralism in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The dangerous tendency to adopt decisions on disarmament and arms control outside the United Nations in opaque negotiating processes and then attempt to have the Assembly later endorse what was agreed in such exercises is unacceptable. In that connection, we recall that the First Committee, the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament are the only universal bodies for deliberation and negotiation on such issues. In order to overcome the stagnation encountered by the disarmament agenda — which is reflected in the functioning of the mechanism established to address it — renewed political support is needed from the international community, particularly from the countries that question the disarmament and non-proliferation priorities established during the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Cuba believes it is imperative that we immediately undertake real and effective reform and a comprehensive process of democratizing the United Nations to guarantee the capacity of the Organization to preserve peace and to lead the struggle for general and complete disarmament — including nuclear disarmament — to which humanity aspires. The reform and revitalization of the General Assembly must be a single integrated process undertaken within the scope of the working group established to this end. That is where important decisions must be taken to guarantee more effective and efficient work in all of the Main Committees of the Assembly, including the First Committee.

High-ranking officials of the United States Government have, repeatedly and in a dangerous manner, been launching a series of totally false and unfounded accusations against Cuba, alleging, without any proof whatsoever, that our country has developed a limited capacity for research and development in the field of biological weapons. Once more, we strongly reject such lies that attempt to link Cuba to bio-terrorism. Unlike the United States, my country neither has, nor intends ever to have, any weapon of mass destruction; nor is my country the one opposing the strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention through a protocol that includes transparent and non-discriminatory international control measures.

My country's biological and bio-technological potential is used to promote health, life and development, not only for the Cuban people, but also for other peoples of the world out of solidarity. The alleged link between Cuba and bio-terrorism is used to justify the intensified subversive action against our country and the criminal economic, commercial and financial embargo policy, which has brought about enormous human and economic damage, represents a permanent threat to our country's national security and contravenes international law and the United Nations Charter.

In the course of the past year, the Cuban Government has been taking additional steps that reflect its political will and commitment to an effective disarmament process, especially nuclear disarmament. On 18 September last, the Cuban Government signed a Nuclear Safeguards Accord with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and an Additional Protocol to that agreement in Vienna, pursuant to its commitment as a State party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Cuba's ratification of the Tlatelolco Treaty enabled the full entry into force of this international instrument, and the consolidation of the first densely populated nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world, which will be officially acknowledged by the eighteenth regular session of the General Conference of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), to be held from 5-6 November 2003 in Havana. The holding of such an important event in Cuba constitutes new proof of our commitment to peace, disarmament and multilateralism.

Mr. Zarif (Iran): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your assumption of the chairmanship of this Committee at this important

juncture. My congratulations go equally to the other members of the Bureau. I am confident that your diplomatic skill is an important asset to this Committee which will allow it to achieve positive outcomes this year.

A quarter century ago at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, a document was approved by consensus that is considered to be the constitution of disarmament. The final document of the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament set out the principles and priorities on which the whole structure and machinery of disarmament are based. This structure bore fruit when the world bipolar system collapsed, and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in 1993 and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996 were concluded and negotiations on the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) protocol were intensified. All of these positive developments resulted from adherence to one core principle, namely multilateralism. That principle, has, however, been seriously challenged.

An influential circle that has found a stronghold within the Administration of the only super-Power began challenging the principle of multilateralism by weakening its pillars, not only in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament but also in other areas. One should not lose sight of the fact that withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol, rejection of the BWC protocol, withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) and the events in the United Nations Conference on small arms all occurred before 11 September 2001.

The tragic event of 11 September could have been a point of departure for the promotion of multilateralism and the cultivation of more unity among Member States. Indeed, the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and Security Council and their implementation seemed to signal the emergence of that propitious development. Unfortunately, the unilateral tendency I have referred to considered the 11 September event as an opportunity to pursue the unfinished ambition of forging a new world order through the application of military power in order to arbitrarily reshape one of the most strategic regions in the world. The unsanctioned Iraq war was openly advertised as the first step in this direction.

The waging of that war under the pretext of removing the threat of weapons of mass destruction not only undermined the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime but also weakened the whole concept of multilateralism and the United Nations. It seems, now, that the predictable consequences of the unlawful Iraq war have forced the occupying Powers, and indeed the advocates of unilateralism, to think twice and send out signals for their possible return to multilateral mechanisms.

Turning to the United Nations could be a positive sign if the unilateralists truly and in good faith abandon their misguided approach. The following issues do not, however, support this speculation. First, the occupying Powers have not agreed to the central role of the United Nations in Iraq and have yet to agree to a timetable for returning sovereignty to the Iraqi people; secondly, threatening other countries with pre-emptive attacks and encouraging others to do so continues. Furthermore, plans for developing new nuclear mini-weapons and preparations for testing such weapons in clear contravention of international instruments, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), are on the agenda. Thirdly, parallel tracks to the United Nations and other international organs are being opened and exclusive groupings are being set up under the pretext of arms control and security, which can only result in mistrust.

It is therefore not surprising that those nuclear-weapon States that have continuously worked to ensure that their ability to transit nuclear weapons is not hindered by regional nuclear-weapon-free zones are currently advocating selected interdiction of such suspected materials or any other materials, even with purely civilian applications, to and from certain States under the pretext of preventing proliferation. Those same countries transfer the largest amounts of missiles and weapons to other States, even to the non-parties to non-proliferation and disarmament treaties, every year. Reports of those activities are well documented in the United Nations arms register system.

It seems that the actual intention of the unilateralists to return to the United Nations system does not stem from any real change in their approach; rather it signifies a shift in how they employ the means required. Recent attempts aimed at achieving the objectives of this same unilateral approach by utilizing the potential of international bodies have been noticed.

Those who pursue this approach are of the conviction that their power warrants them to use all means, even within international bodies, to realize their objectives. New suggestions for bringing certain exclusive control initiatives, created outside of the United Nations, into the United Nations and to legitimize them, offer yet another sign of a shift in tactics that will obviously have a negative impact on international cooperation among States, particularly in the areas of security and disarmament.

It also seems that advocates of this approach are trying to influence the reform process within the United Nations organs and move it in a direction compatible with their own objectives. My delegation welcomes any proposal aimed at enhancing the efficiency of United Nations bodies, including the First Committee. In this endeavour, however, the views of all Member States must be taken into account and priority should be given to the long sought objective of humanity, namely nuclear disarmament.

Developments in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation during the period between our last and current session are not promising. For the sake of brevity, I will avoid spelling out our position on these developments and will instead draw the attention of delegates to my written statement.

The calamity of weapons of mass destruction, which are amongst the most potent threats to peace and security, is not something new. Humanity would never forget the victims of the bombing of Hiroshima or Sardasht in Iran or Halabja in Iraq. As the last victim of weapons of mass destruction at the end of the twentieth century, the Islamic Republic of Iran has learned the horrors of such weapons at first hand, as was eloquently stated by the Secretary-General in the plenary:

> "Weapons of mass destruction do not threaten only the western or northern world. Ask the people of Iran, or of Halabja, in Iraq." (*A/58/PV.7, p. 3*)

I can only stress that the people of Iran are still anguished by the threat posed to the region by weapons of mass destruction. Drawing upon its bitter experience with respect to weapons of mass destruction and more importantly, based on its religious beliefs, Iran has always demonstrated its determination to achieve total elimination of weapons of mass destruction from the face of the earth.

Adherence to three major international treaties in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, namely the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as well as making declarations and receiving inspections, have produced little reward except the continuation of unjustified restrictions against my country.

In the field of nuclear technology, I wish to emphasize that the construction of the Bushehr nuclear power plant was begun before the Islamic Revolution by Western countries, at a time when they felt it was completely justified for Iran to diversify its sources of energy. Nobody heard stories then of why an oil and gas rich country would need nuclear energy, stories that today have become common. Just before the revolution, on 20 October 1978, the United States Department of State expressed the view in a memorandum that the United States was encouraged by Iran's efforts to expand its non-oil energy base and was hopeful that the United States-Iran Nuclear Energy Agreement would be concluded soon and that American companies will be able to play a role in Iran's nuclear energy projects.

Iran invested heavily in this project. Without fuel, the Bushehr plant would be an abandoned building. Current limitations and persistent threats to deprive Iran of fuel for the plant have led us to work towards self-sufficiency by developing indigenous capability in this respect. Hence, in the area of peaceful nuclear technology we had no choice other than to work in various ways, including importing the necessary parts from intermediaries to guarantee the future supply of fuel for our nuclear power plants under construction.

It has already been accepted that some technical failures, similar to other cases encountered by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), have occurred, although the recent case has been unjustifiably politicized. We have worked with the IAEA to rectify these technical failures, but this does not mean that we should give in to unreasonable demands that are discriminatory, selective and go beyond the requirements of non-proliferation under existing IAEA instruments. The benefits of advanced technologies belong to humanity and no nation must be deprived of their use for peaceful purposes.

Iran has declared on many occasions that it has never pursued a nuclear weapons programme and will never do so. Our nuclear programme is solely for peaceful purposes and we have therefore no problem in principle with transparency, including implementation of the provisions of the Additional Protocol. To this end, we have worked and continue to cooperate with the IAEA to remove all doubts about the peaceful nature of our nuclear programme at the earliest possible time. Hopefully, all outstanding issues would be solved, if and when the politically motivated propaganda allows that.

In conclusion, I should emphasize that the issues related to technical failures will eventually be clarified. However, the non-compliance of others, including the United States, which after 35 years has yet to implement the provisions of nuclear disarmament under article VI of the NPT, must not remain unaddressed, along with its non-compliance regarding the transfer of nuclear weapons technology to Israel in clear violation of article I of the NPT.

Last but not least, one may ask why, when some members of this Committee expressed concern over the safeguarded peaceful activities of Iran, not even a single reference was made in their statements with regard to the continued development of weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems by Israel. Let us hope that it was simple negligence and that they, like the other members of the international community, will truly support the collective wisdom and endeavours to achieve a world free from weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Christofides (Cyprus): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are confident that with your long experience and wise guidance the goals of this Committee will be fully achieved. I would also like to assure you of my delegation's full support for your important task.

The Republic of Cyprus has aligned itself with the comprehensive statement delivered by the Italian presidency on behalf of the European Union and I will thus limit my statement to some issues of particular interest to my delegation by focusing on some recent initiatives of my Government in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

We are very pleased to bring to the attention of this Committee the fact that, earlier this year, Cyprus deposited its instrument of ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, thus reaffirming its support of the international community's collective efforts to eliminate this totally inhumane method of warfare.

Despite the continuing foreign occupation of almost 40 per cent of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus and the constant threat posed by some 40,000 occupation troops stationed on the island, the ratification of the Ottawa Convention comes as a concrete demonstration of our political will for peace and reconciliation in Cyprus consistent with our genuine commitment to international norms in the field of disarmament.

We had the opportunity last year to refer to several concrete steps we had been taking in line with the Convention's aims, including mine clearance operations, refurbishment of existing minefields and the destruction of stockpiles. It should be noted that since 1983, the Government of Cyprus has cleared ten minefields adjacent to the buffer zone, and during the last two years destroyed more than 11,000 mines of various types.

Furthermore, the Government of Cyprus has taken the initiative to clear all minefields laid by the National Guard in the buffer zone immediately after the Turkish invasion in Cyprus. This has been done in an effort to reduce tension and put an end to the threat against innocent human life, thus contributing to the return of these areas to conditions of normality and safety.

The President of the Republic of Cyprus, speaking before the General Assembly last month, announced the Government's decision and firm commitment: first, to start unilaterally demining in the buffer zone within the next two months, in cooperation with the United Nations and with the financial support of the European Union (EU); and secondly, to proceed unilaterally with the destruction of an appreciable amount of stockpiled anti-personnel mines, during the month of November this year. The President stated that this was a first but major step in the implementation of the country's obligations under the Ottawa Convention.

Cyprus is firmly committed to a policy of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and has ratified all relevant international instruments. Moreover, being a member of the Australia Group and

the Nuclear Suppliers Group for the last three years, Cyprus has recently submitted its formal application to become also a member of the Missile Technology Control Regime. In this respect, I would like to mention here that my Government has set up an efficient national export controls system, which is modelled on the European Union (EU) guidelines and the guidelines of the export control regimes of which Cyprus is a member.

The EU "acquis" in the field of export controls has been fully implemented in view of our coming full accession to the European Union on 1 May 2004. In addition, Cyprus has subscribed to the International Code of Conduct on missiles and is about to submit its first annual declaration. We take this opportunity to express our support of this important initiative and our view that a relationship between the Code and the United Nations should be established.

Finally, we are also pleased to report that, on 18 July 2003, Cyprus deposited its instrument of ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and we join previous speakers in calling for its early entry into force.

The Chairman: I shall now call on those delegations who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. Before doing so, I would like to remind them that the Committee would follow the procedure that I have outlined at previous meetings, including yesterday.

Ms. Yesim Say (Turkey): As I am taking the floor for the first time, please allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee, and the other members of the Bureau on their election.

I would like to respond to the unfounded allegations made by the previous speaker. I do not, however, wish to waste the valuable time of the Committee; I shall, therefore, be very brief.

First of all, I want to underline the fact that there exist two peoples with two distinct languages in Cyprus, and the island is the home of two democratic States. Therefore, neither party represents and/or speaks for the other, and neither can claim jurisdiction or sovereignty over the other.

Lastly and very briefly, with regard to the accusation of alleged occupation and invasion, I would like to refresh the memories of the members of the Committee by pointing out that Turkey, as one of the guarantors, had to act in exercise of its legitimate right to end the massacres of Turkish Cypriot people.

Mr. Christofides (Cyprus): I really regret this statement by the Turkish representative. I do not know what she didn't like in the statement I just made. I was not trying to politicize discussions in this Committee. I was merely trying to explain the whole context of our ratification and the efforts we are making in terms of demining the buffer zone and sending a message to Turkish Cypriots that we want peace and reconciliation in Cyprus. There is really no need for me to go into how many States there are in Cyprus. It is really ridiculous. I refer the representative of Turkey to resolutions of the Security Council. There is only one State in Cyprus. I am proud to represent its Government. The other entity referred to by the Turkish representative is just — and here I use the terminology of the European Code of Human Rights — a subordinate, local administration of Turkey, and nothing more.

Secondly, the alleged massacres are part of a myth that has really collapsed during the past year. For those who have followed the Cyprus problem over the past year, with the partial lifting of restrictions and obligations that the occupational regime had to do during the past spring, events have proven that the Turkish Cypriots really do not need the protection of Turkey. They really do not need 40,000 Turkish troops in Cyprus to be protected. They are massively going to the south, enjoying contacts with the Greek Cypriots, and they want peace and resolution on the basis of the plan offered by the Secretary-General.

Today I read in the news that there was a demonstration of 10,000 Turkish Cypriots in Nicosia in favour of resolution. They are in favour of resolution on the basis of the Annan plan, the Secretary-General's plan, and they want to be united with us in a united Europe.

The Chairman: Before adjourning the meeting, allow me again to remind all delegations that the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions under all disarmament and international security agenda items is tomorrow, Wednesday, 15 October, at 6 p.m. Delegations are invited to introduce their draft resolutions during the second phase of the Committee's work, namely, the thematic discussion on item subjects and the introduction and consideration of draft

resolutions. However, I would like to stress again that the deadline for submission of those draft resolutions is indeed tomorrow, Wednesday, at 6 p.m.

Furthermore, although there will be no list of speakers for the planned informal exchange of views on the Committee's working methods on this coming Thursday and Friday, I would nevertheless suggest that delegations inform the Secretariat of their plans to speak prior to the informal meetings, if possible. If not, requests for interventions will be taken directly from the floor during the informal exchange of views.

Mr. Sattar (Secretary of the Committee): I have been requested to make the following announcements. The delegations of Brazil and New Zealand invite sponsors and potential sponsors of the draft resolution entitled "Nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas", to remain in the room after this afternoon's meeting of the First Committee in order to present and discuss the draft resolution they intend to present for the consideration of the First Committee. I would also like to inform Committee members that the Non-Aligned Movement working group on disarmament will have an informal consultation tomorrow, Wednesday, 15 October, at 10.30 a.m. at the Permanent Mission of Indonesia. The address is 325 East 38th Street.

The Chairman: The next meeting of the Committee will be held tomorrow afternoon at 3 p.m. sharp in Conference Room 4. There were a few rollovers from today's list of speakers for tomorrow, and that means that we will probably have a full day. Again, I intend to start the meeting at 3 p.m. sharp.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.